



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC Commences *Lands of Opportunity* Initiative for Rural America Access to Affordable and Quality Telecommunications Services in Rural America

Washington, DC -- The Federal Communications Commission's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau today identified three regions – tribal lands, Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta – for a comprehensive, sixteen-month effort to inform consumers about the policies, rules and federal programs available to improve access to telecommunications services.

“We are tremendously excited by the opportunities available for competitive telecommunications services to reach rural portions of America,” K. Dane Snowden, Chief of the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau said. “Our work is to inform these historically underserved portions of the country of the wide variety of programs and services available. We look forward to establishing long-term partnerships with community leaders and consumers in these regions.”

The first step in this new outreach effort will be to increase the awareness of the federal Universal Service Lifeline program, which provide discounts for local phone service to eligible low-income consumers, and Link-Up, which provides discounts for low-income consumers for phone line installation. CGB plans to deliver educational materials about these programs to community centers, community health care providers, state and local public welfare offices, and other outlets to ensure that eligible consumers are aware of these programs and have the opportunity to subscribe to them.

Following this initial phase, CGB will expand the scope of the outreach to include other universal service programs, participation in regional workshops, conferences and events focusing on telecommunications issues in these regions of rural America.

The Bureau also announced that as part of ITI, Commission staff would soon be visiting Alaska to engage Alaskan natives with regard to the impediments to telecommunication subscribership and deployment experienced there. As a part of its outreach initiative, the Bureau announced that the Commission's rural webpage is being restructured to provide easier access to information about the FCC's activities impacting rural America. To visit the webpage, log on at www.fcc.gov/cgb/rural/.

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